

This is long, but I hope it is my last long letter/email on the topic. I debated doing a video so you can hear my heart in it, but trust that it will come through the writing.

Again I am sorry for all the mess that has happened. I am sorry that the delay in bringing the information to the remaining 2 board members is a big reason for this current mess.

I processed after yesterday's meeting and want to share the following.

I understand I do not have a legal vote in CFC nor am I requesting one. I mentioned my resignation if the board asked for it, but to be clear I haven't resigned unless that takes place. I have and always will want to see the full restoration of Steven Koko so he can be the man that God created him to be but only Steven Koko can control that outcome. I also have and still want the best for CFC. No hidden agendas. No malicious intent. It's unfortunate that the way things unfolded that it was even considered. But it happened and understandably so.

So this is solely a recommendation based on my understanding of the situation, Steven Koko, CFC's operations, and my 20+ years of ministry involvements that include overseeing international mission programs, Bible School, and various ministries within the local church (probably a bit from my 7 years as a businessman in here too).

Many people over the years from Pete Les to the Bucks to yourselves have tried to clean up and get CFC sorted out but the truth is after many years it's now gotten much messier. Somehow CFC never got to the point of having proper bylaws and accountability for its president and other staff. I said yesterday that the problems (yes, Steven Kokos actions are also responsible) can be traced back to a governmental/structural issue. We can't go back in time and fix that, but it brings us where we are today.

The board now has a decision. Quite a few decisions actually. Will CFC have an interim leader and wait for its founder and president to return or go through a myriad of options and probably long ongoing meetings until a consensus is reached?

Here's the option that I am recommending and my reasons for it. Maybe it's surprising, but do with it as you will.

Dissolve Cities for Christ after using its assets to help people and give it the chance to finish well.

Reason 1 - Its mandate was to help people. Here's a chance to return to that.

CFC was to help people find spiritual, emotional, and even physical restoration through the power of the Gospel of Jesus. Let's remember that it has done this, but because of the lack of accountability, healthy culture, and proper structures put in place it has also abused and hurt those it was called to love and protect. These were the actions of one man, but it happened while he was under the banner of CFC. Due to this, CFC's reputation has a growing negative reputation among many churches and people who have served and volunteered with CFC and this was happening before anyone was told of Steve's sexual sin.

Reason 2 - CFC isn't full of strong sub ministries. Its best assets are either going to leave no matter what happens, easily rebuilt, or able to be handed off to other similar ministries to carry on the work like the feeding program.

The first week I was interim president I met with each staff member individually to ask them questions so I could become an “expert” of CFC and understand how it operated and how it came to operate that way. I found that most ministries that operate within CFC are underdeveloped or were improperly developed like paying people to come to Bible studies or taking a large donation with side deals that were not agreed on by board or team. If asked I can outline each ministry one by one and where it currently sits but of course this is my formed opinion and you are free to speak to team members themselves and come to your own conclusions.

Reason 3 - CFC gets to show people how to make things right even when a mess was made.

I’ve been a part of a handful of situations where the main leader has made sinful decisions that require discipline and proper communication with those who have been connected to the ministry. Often people are sad, hurt, confused, upset, and a myriad of other emotions. How beautiful would it be to show people that although a mess was made this is how you own it and do what you can to make it right in a way that glorifies Christ and restores hope to people aware of CFC. It’s a potential testimony and it would be nice to see some positives after a lot of negatives.

Reason 4 - If God wants Steven Koko to have a ministry then let God decide when and how as it’s clear he can’t lead in his current condition and if or when that will change is unknown.

True ministries can’t be taken or stolen, they are birthed by God in the heart of a founder. People have supported Koko for many years (myself included), but if they really knew what’s been happening in his life they wouldn’t continue. Things have been coming out about Koko (not by me other than to the core team recently) and it is/was only a matter of time before CFC loses, most if not all, of its credibility. I don’t believe that this will be easily navigated now or in the future if the name Cities for Christ remains.

Reason 5 - (to be approached with a lawyer) If there is any chance of legal action taken against Steven Koko I believe CFC could be implicated and this may be avoided if wisely handled and dissolved.

This is my assumption and not a legal opinion. Again I’m not currently calling for it, but am still unaware of everything that has happened. I have no plans to seek out any more details on Steven Koko’s actions personally but will also not stop anyone from coming to me if they see fit with any information nor do I control if any woman comes forward with claims either true or not. It’s also possible that partner donations were used to fund air bnbs where the abuse took place and possibly airfare to fly at least one girl into different countries which is something that I recommend to research and discuss with a lawyer. (my conversations are now with you and I am/will be presenting to you the board any information relating to this from here on out. That is why I am asking for confidentiality with this letter. I know you were in the dark originally on things and my intention is for you to now be informed and then leave you to make the decisions)

If this option is considered here are my thoughts on what restitution could look like:

- Partners/donors - some money seems to have been taken under side deals and needs to be returned. Major donations should be returned with an apology (doesn’t need to be specific with Kokos issues as I believe any information officially released by CFC should be done so playfully and with legal advisement)

- Severance for all staff to help cover living expenses as they seek new employment
- Restitution fund for the women that Steven Koko hurt and abused if there are more than one found. This could help with their own counseling needs and other things that I leave to your discretion other than advising to find something that produces recurring revenue if possible as opposed to sending money directly)
- Fund set aside in a non CFC controlled account (maybe his restoration committee can oversee this) for the professional help of Steven Koko and his living expenses for a predetermined length of time so that he has time to process, start his counseling sessions with a professional, and find a job and place to live. (getting a job was originally suggested by Pastor Dan so Koko wouldn't just sit at home by himself and be more damaged mentally). I debated not mentioning this, but will as I believe that although the board would disagree with how things were handled and approached they are now at least beginning to believe it wasn't malicious. I encourage those involved in Kokos restoration to read the book "Unpunishable" by Danny Silk. It gives a lot of context on how to help people who are stuck in sin and uses the example of a man similar to Stephen Koko - Jonathan Welton. He had a respected ministry and was involved in hurting people and falling sexually though married with a family. He would tell partial truths and manipulate when confronted to the point that a group of trusted leaders publicly released a letter asking for the closing of his ministry. It happened. When Jonathan relented to get professional help he was diagnosed as a clinical narcissist. They were told that that diagnosis has an extremely poor recovery rate and is the product of childhood trauma. But over a period of 3 years Jonathan did the tough, ongoing work and as of this year has started posting videos about his journey and is speaking authentically into issues and becoming a person of positive influence again. I think he'll find his way into ministry again although it will look much different than before. I believe that if tested we may find that Koko has a similar diagnosis and process if he chooses it. (I would love to see Jonathan even be part of helping Koko if that's the case, but will leave that there for now)

Lastly, you may disagree and have a right to do so, but I believe that ultimately Steven Koko put his love for ministry above his love for Jesus. I have studied fallen leaders and those who finish well since I was 15 years old. Though it may manifest in many different ways, this is the fatal flaw you can trace to all of those who succumb to some scandal whether it be sexual, greed, or otherwise. I believed in Koko and for years have desired to see him and CFC thrive even without my personal involvement. I still believe in both but because of what I now know I only believe that Koko should be given a chance to get the professional help he needs and that CFC is given the chance to make things right. I am willing to help with the latter if you are open to my recommendations above and would want me to.

In that understanding I would continue my role as Interim president to help the board with the restitution plan I've outlined (of course with their input and recommendations and final decisions on it) until CFC is officially closed. Other than the purchase of my plane ticket to Chicago I have never personally received money from Cities for Christ. That won't change even if I'm involved in this. To me this money is stained and needs to be put to helping people, staff, and the costs of closing a ministry. I believe all involved in that process should do so voluntarily.

I also believe you were all sincere in your love for Steven Koko and Cities for Christ and, for what it's worth, do want to commend you for serving in this ministry and in doing so serving Jesus Himself. Bless you all for what you have done and the fruit and seeds that are present in spite of everything that has happened. I am praying for you all and for the wisdom and clarity that is needed at this time.

Humbly,
Tim Harrlson